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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Ms. Chris DENELL (Sweden)

Chapter ___

NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

(Agenda item 4)

1. The Commission considered item 4 of its agenda at its 476th and 477th meetings on 27 and 28 February. It had before it the report of the Task Force on National Accounts (E/CN.3/1995/3). A draft paper proposing an approach to be used by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat (UNSTAT) and the regional commissions in the implementation of the System of National Accounts 1993 (1993 SNA) was presented to the Commission as a background document.

2. The Commission expressed its thanks for the report submitted by the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA), in particular the four elements of the support system provided in section II of the report of the Task Force, and took note of the consolidated presentation of ISWGNA activities contained in table 1 of the report. Noting the magnitude of this undertaking and the scarce resources, both human and financial, that were available, the Commission reaffirmed that a high priority must be assigned to this undertaking. For that reason, implementation of the 1993 SNA will continue to require the close attention of the Commission over the coming years.

3. The Commission confirmed that implementation was essentially the responsibility of individual countries and would need to proceed in accordance with their own priorities. In that regard, a need was seen for the less statistically developed countries to concentrate upon the development of basic statistics. The availability of the 1993 SNA in all the official languages of the United Nations and of the relevant manuals and handbooks was essential for that purpose, as was the provision of technical assistance and training. It was acknowledged that the regional commissions would have to play a key role in the process. It was also noted that each international organization would adopt a different approach to facilitating and supporting national implementation.

4. Concern was expressed by some members, who indicated that the report did not adequately address a number of specific requests made by the Statistical Commission at its special session in April 1994. In particular, some members requested a further elaboration of criteria for measuring progress and assessing the needs and availability of resources so as to establish a strategy with an explicit time-frame for implementation of the 1993 SNA. It was pointed out that the recent series of regional and other workshops and seminars organized by ISWGNA members was helping countries to understand the work involved in implementing the 1993 SNA and thus to formulate their own national plans and strategies, including needs for technical assistance.

Action taken by the Commission

5. The Commission:

(a) Requested ISWGNA to meet the request made by the Statistical Commission at its special session in 1994 for a strategy paper to be drawn up on the implementation of the 1993 SNA, defining criteria against which progress could be judged. The paper should build on the draft paper already prepared by UNSTAT and on country responses to the new SNA questionnaire;

(b) Agreed that the tables included in the new SNA questionnaire should define the target framework for the implementation of the 1993 SNA. As those tables could also be approximately identified in the current SNA questionnaire, both questionnaires could be used as a check-list for monitoring the implementation. That would enable the regional commissions to define sub-targets for different groups of countries, according to their national accounts development. A regional pilot project approach could be used by the regional commissions to respond to the needs of these subregional groups of countries;

(c) Reiterated that the regional commissions had a key role to play in promoting and monitoring implementation;

(d) Emphasized that implementation of the 1993 SNA demanded paying close attention to the development of basic economic statistics in a systematic manner;

(e) Endorsed the programme of further conceptual and practical research recommended by ISWGNA and asked that special attention be given to the needs of the developing countries, including taking account of the informal sector;

(f) Recommended strengthening the capabilities of the regional commissions, and noted the need for mobilization of bilateral and multilateral resources, both at the global and regional levels, in recognition of the fact that organizational support for implementation depended critically on the availability of human and financial resources. In particular, the Commission requested a consolidated, country-by-country report of the needs for assistance and financing. In that context, it reiterated the need for training to expand the technical resource base for SNA implementation and for technical assistance. It noted with appreciation the offer of some countries to expand their support for the implementation of the 1993 SNA by providing technical and financial resources;

(g) Reiterated the urgent need to make the 1993 SNA available in all official languages of the United Nations and to complete the programme of handbooks as quickly as possible.